

Message Text

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ACTION PRS-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 OC-06

CCO-00 SSO-00 /038 W

-----221706Z 041379 /43/40

O 221335Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5353

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 5)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP, (VANCE, CYRUS R)

SUBJECT: SECVISIT: PRESS ARRANGEMENTS

REF: (A) STATE 059682 (B) STATE 056619 (C) MOSCOW 3769

1. EMBOFFS MET MARCH 21 WITH BOTH MFA PRESS DEPARTMENT (SEPTTEL C) AND INTOURIST. IN HEATED DISCUSSION WITH INTOURIST PROTOCOL CHIEF SIMCHENKO AND ASSISTANT BAGROV MARCH 21, PRESS ATTACHE AND ASSISTANT INFORMATIN OFFICERS WERE FLATLY TOLD THAT CERTAIN DETAILS OF SIMIRO PROPOSAL WERE WRONG. ACCORDING TO SIMCHENKO, INTOURIST-MOSCOW PROPOSED PACKAGE TO SIMIRO COSTING 69 RUBLES PER DAY-- PLUS 40 RUBLES FOR MEALS FOR ENTIRE VISIT. THIS TOTALS 385 RUBLES OR \$517 PER PERSON. PACKAGE WOULD INCLUDE SINGLE FIRST CLASS ROO, THREE MEALS PER DAY PLUS WELCOMING BANQUET EVENING OF ARRIVAL, TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN AIRPORT AND HOTEL BY CAR, ONE CAR AVAILABLE FOR EVERY TWO PERSONS BETWEEN 0900 AND 2300 DAILY, INTERPRETERS, ROOMS FOR TELEXES AND TELEPHONES (PROVIDED BY MFA), WITH CREDIT CARDS AND COLLECT CALLS ACCEPTABLE. NO USE OF "PRESS CENTER" PROVIDED (EMBASSY WILL PROVIDE PRESS ROOM PER REF B, PARA 6) AND INTOURIST DENIED THAT MFA

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HAD ASKED THEM TO ACQUIRE TYPEWRITERS (REF C). EMBOFF DEMAND THAT INTOURIST STRAIGHTEN OUT SIMIRO BRUSHED ASIDE WITH COUNTER THAT INTOURIST PROPOSAL CLEAR AND SIMIRO "AMERICAN" PROBLEM. EMBASSY REQUEST THAT FACILITIES BE PROVIDED IN EVENT SECRETARY HOLDS PRESS BRIEFINGS MET WITH INTOURIST DEMAND TO RENT HALL BY MARCH 23 OR FIND OTHER LOCATION THROUGH MFA. EMBASSY

SEEKING APPOINTMENT WITH MFA TO DISCUSS INTOURIST MEETING.

2. PRIMARY DIFFICULTY IS IN DEALING WITH STATE MONOPOLY WHICH ADOPTS BASIC ATTITUDE OF "TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT". EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT INTOURIST IS FAR MORE INTERESTED IN COLD CASH THAN IN CATERING TO NEEDS OF MEDIA WHICH THEY REALLY WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE COME IN FIRST PLACE. CLASSIC EXAMPLE WAS TOUR OF SOVIET UNION BY ASTRONAUTS AND COSMONAUTS WHO TOOK PART IN APOLLO-SOYUZ TEST PROJECT. IN SITUATION WHERE THERE WERE NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAVORABLE PRESS COVERAGE IN WEST, INTOURIST "NICKLE-AND-DIMED" MEDIA UNTIL FEW CORRESPONDENTS MADE TRIP.

3. PRESS CORPS MEMBERS SHOULD NOT FEEL THEY ARE BEING SINGLED OUT FOR ESPECIALLY DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT. BE ASSURED THAT EVERYONE ELSE--TOURISTS, RESIDENT CORRESPONDENTS, DIPLOMATS, BUSINESSMEN, USIA EXHIBIT STAFFS--GETS RIPPED OFF WITHOUT REGARD TO NATIONALITY SO LONG AS LATTER IS OF COUNTRY WITH CONVERTIBLE CURRENCY. AS CASE IN POINT, INTOURIST ASSURED US THAT THIRD-COUNTRY JOURNALISTS COMING TO COVER SECRETARY'S VISIT BEING CHARGED EXACTLY THE SAME FIGURE AS THOSE IN PARTY. DOLLAR FIGURES FOR VISITS OF THIS TYPE ARE INORDINATELY HIGH BECAUSE INTOURIST INSISTS ON PACKAGE DEAL INCLUDING ROOM, TRANSPORTATION, INTERPRETERS, MEALS, ETC. WE HAVE ATTEMPTED WITHOUT SUCCESS ON PAST OCCASIONS TO RID PACKAGE DEAL OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNWANTED OR OVERPRICED COMPONENTS, BUT WE ALWAYS END UP BACK AT THE "TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT" SPOT. INTOURIST HAS EVEN REFUSED TO BREAK PACKAGE DOWN INTO DOLLAR FIGURES FOR EACH INDEPENDENT ITEM. OTHER SOVIET ORGANIZATIONS, EG, MFA, USUALLY REFUSE TO INTERCEDE SINCE INTOURIST IS "INDEPENDENT" CORPORATION.

4. CORRESPONDENTS MIGHT CORRECTLY POINT OUT THAT INTOURIST SELDOM IF EVER ACTUALLY PROVIDES SERVICES UP TO STANDARDS PAID FOR. SNAFUS REGULARLY OCCUR WITH CARS, ROOMS, VOUCHERS, AND JUST ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE THAT CAN GO WRONG. THIS, TOO, IS NOT DIRECTED AT MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES IN PARTICULAR. AGAIN, WITH A STATE MONOPOLY, IT'S "TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT."

5. IF IT IS ANY ENCOURAGEMENT AT ALL, WE NOTE THAT IN SPITE OF THE STEADILY DECLINING VALUE OF THE DOLLAR IN OFFICIAL (AND UNREALISTIC) RUBLE TERMS, THE PRICE PER DAY IS ABOUT THE SAME AS EARLIER. WE RECALL THAT

PRICE FOR NIXON VISIT IN 1974 WAS WELL OVER DOLLARS 100
PER DAY. DURING KISSINGER VISIT IN JANUARY, 1976,
PRICE WAS DOLLARS 101.33 PER DAY. FIGURE QUOTED REFTEL
A WORKS OUT TO SHADE OVER DOLLARS 93 PER DAY, OR
INTOURIST MOSCOW PRICE COMES TO \$103.60 DAILY.

6. CORRESPONDENTS TRAVELLING WITH THE SECRETARY SHOULD
BE TOLD IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT EMBASSY HAS IN PAST
ANDIS NOW TAKING ALL POSSIBLE STEPS TO REPRESENT
INTERESTS OF PRESS CONTINGENT WHEN DEALING WITH
SOVIETS. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT CLAIM TO BE SUCCESSFUL
IN PRODUCING BARGAINS FOR THE MEDIA, WE DO FIND NOTABLY
UNFAIR THE SENTIMENT IN REFTEL A THAT WE "COULD HAVE
DONE SOMETHING ABOUT THIS INEQUITY BUT DIDN'T BOTHER."
IN FACT, THERE ARE FEW MATTERS ON WHICH WE HAVE SPENT
MORE TIME AND EFFORT, BUT WE SIMPLY LACK ANY LEVERAGE
TO FORCE SOVIETS TO MODIFY TERMS.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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